

BORDER XXI PROGRAM NATIONAL COORDINATORS' MEETING PLENARY SESSION SUMMARY NOTES

This summary provides the highlights of the plenary session held on September 21, 2000, at the Camino Real Hotel in El Paso, Texas. The purpose of the session was to present the findings of the Border XXI Program National Coordinators' Meeting (NCM) Workgroup meetings that were held on September 20, 2000, in El Paso, Texas. During the Border XXI Program Workgroup meetings, information was exchanged discussing the future direction of the next U.S.-Mexico border program plan. Representatives from federal, state, and local government agencies, and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also attended the plenary session. The public was also invited to attend.

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. William (Bill) Nitze of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) opened the plenary session by highlighting the accomplishments of the Border XXI Program since the program's inception in 1995. Mr. Nitze, who serves as the U.S. National Coordinator of the Border XXI Program, first noted that since the start of the Border XXI Program, the North American Development Bank (NADB) has matured. NADB is an international, financial institution established and capitalized in equal parts by the United States and Mexico for the purpose of financing environmental infrastructure projects. All projects funded by NADB must be (1) certified by NADB's sister institution, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), (2) related to potable water supply, wastewater treatment, or municipal solid waste management and (3) located within the border region. He added that many new projects will soon be certified by NADB. Mr. Nitze continued that the Border XXI Program has remained focused on meeting infrastructure needs and sustainable development, and has made progress in incorporating public participation into the program.

Continuing, Mr. Nitze said that the Border XXI Program will continue to play an important role in meeting the infrastructure needs and fostering sustainable development in the future. As a result of infrastructure and other development projects, higher paying jobs will be created, increasing the tax base and raising revenues. These higher revenues can then be used to fund more infrastructure projects, continuing the cycle of sustainable development. Specifically, he noted, future projects will target (1) the solicitation of public participation; (2) the development of environmental indicators, especially indicators for drinking water quality; and (3) tracking of contaminant sources. Mr. Nitze stated that more future projects will be directed by local governments and organizations. Eventually, he explained, the Border XXI Program will also address more air pollution issues. In closing, Mr. Nitze stressed that the improved Border XXI Program will reaffirm the commitment of the United States to partner with Mexico on environmental protection. Mr. Nitze then expressed his appreciation and presented awards to Mr. José Luis Samaniego, *Secretariat de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca* (SEMARNAP); Mr. Abraham Nehmad, SEMARNAP; and Ms. Julia Carabias Lillo, former Secretary for SEMARNAP, and her staff for their dedication and contribution to the Border XXI Program.

Mr. José Luis Samaniego, SEMARNAP, who serves as the Mexican National Coordinator of the Border XXI Program, remarked that the NCM represented an opportunity to "take the pulse" of the Border XXI Program by providing a forum to discuss the programs' achievements, measure the tasks at hand, and develop a plan for future attack. He acknowledged that some goals of the Border XXI program had not yet been accomplished. In order to bring the program to maturity, he stressed that both the United States and Mexico must pledge a common ambition and, together, develop a formula to realize qualitative and quantitative goals.

SUMMARIES OF THE WORKGROUP MEETINGS

Summarized below are the deliberations of the members of the nine workgroups of the Border XXI Program during their meetings held on September 19-20, 2000, at the Camino Real Hotel in El Paso, Texas.

Environmental Health Workgroup

The Environmental Health Workgroup received updates on the progress of each workgroup's initiatives.

Pesticide Exposure and Health Effects on Children—The objective of this study is to examine pesticide exposure and the potential health effects on children living in the border region by analyzing multiple sources of pesticide exposure through multiple routes of exposure. Thus far, Phase I has been initiated, which focuses on capacity building through the use of survey questionnaires; analysis of existing data on types and qualities of pesticides applied as well as health data; and compilation of data through a geographic information system (GIS) model. Under Phase II of the initiative, which focuses on the identification of children suffering health effects associated with exposure to pesticides through field studies, five studies have been initiated. Future work planned under Phase II includes (1) the development of a pesticide questionnaire that will correlate the questions asked with the levels of pesticides actually measured, (2) the use of passive air samples to estimate amount of exposure, and (3) the use of GIS technology to predict the locations with the highest concentrations of pesticide exposure. The workgroup is planning to use GIS models to extrapolate information from the field data for health forecasting. Phase III of the initiative will focus on using the knowledge gained from Phases I and II to design and conduct a more comprehensive pesticide exposure study. Mr. Steven Hern, EPA National Exposure Research Laboratory, provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

Pediatric Lead Exposure Identification and Risk Reduction—Under this initiative, two blood lead investigations have been conducted in Irvine, California, and Tijuana, Mexico. The investigations included (1) data collection, (2) training of local health personnel, (3) implementation of community education, and (4) establishment of a laboratory for blood lead analysis. In addition, children with elevated blood lead levels have received follow-up care through case management. A summary report presenting the results of the lead exposure surveys is being drafted. Also under this initiative, lead exposure surveys will be conducted in three communities located in the eastern border region to fill in data gaps in pediatric lead exposure data for this area of the border. Mr. Juan Rauda Esquivel, *Secretaría de Salud* (SSA, or Mexico's Secretary of Health), provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000.

Neural Tube Defect Assessment Along the U.S.-Mexican Border—The purpose of this initiative is to document and reduce the prevalence of neural tube defects (NTD) in the border region through (1) case control and epidemiological studies, (2) fortification of flour and grain food products, (3) training of health professionals in the border region, and (4) education of at-risk populations. Activities underway include the publishing of research data on NTD probability with the help of university students and the implementation of case studies with the help of the *Centro Nacional de Sanidad Agropecuaria* (CENSA, or Mexico's Department of Agriculture) and University of San Diego (USD). Eventually, data collected will be applied in a GIS model. Dr. Enrique Paz, Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000.

Advanced Training in Environmental/Occupational Health—The focus of this initiative is to build

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expertise in environmental epidemiology and toxicology. Project approaches include training graduate students, promoting binational faculty exchanges and border sabbaticals, and developing short courses and other innovative continuing education opportunities. The target audience is persons working in governmental and non-governmental institutions and universities in the border region. Recommendations received from CENSA representatives working on this project include increased involvement from EPA's border offices. Dr. Enrique Paz—filling in for Ms. Sherry Baron—provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000.

Border Environmental Health Alerts—This initiative was introduced to ensure and facilitate access to quality health and environmental information for the border communities, health providers, and border health officials. Mr. Ken Smith of the New Mexico Environment Department provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000. The following four projects under this initiative have been completed or are in progress:

- a. Environmental Health Yellow Pages—Completed in Spring 1999, this document provides a resource listing of offices in the U.S. border region that have primary responsibility for a particular environmental health issue. The document will later be updated to include Mexico.
- b. Specific Health Alerts—This project is designed to provide health care providers and health care officials with important information within a short period of time. Alerts will include epidemiological and product-related information. Currently, the states of New Mexico, Texas, and Chihuahua are working on an “Epi-fax” system to quickly disburse information on communicable diseases.
- c. General Health Alerts—This project has been expanded to provide the general public with important information within a short period of time. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has taken an active role in this project and is working to develop the “Epi-net” Internet web site to disseminate information.
- d. Library/Information Index—This project has not met much success; however, the need to create a repository for environmental health reports remains. One idea for improving the success of this project is to require that deliverable distribution list include the library.

International Toxicology and Poison Control Center Development—The purpose of this project is to increase the ability of local, state, and regional toxicology centers to (1) respond to the clinical necessities of poisoned patients and environmental emergencies, and (2) improve the capacity of environmental health officials to identify potentially hazardous places and industries. The current focus of the centers is to build capacity through training and specific emergency response preparedness. The centers are also addressing chemical-specific health consultation requests. The future activities planned under this initiative include (1) continuing to support Mexico with technical help, (2) collaborating with PAHO on project activities, and (3) conducting health assessments and providing communities with epidemiological training seminars. Mr. Steve Jones, EPA Headquarter's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, provided an update for Mr. Juan Reyes on this initiative during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

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U.S.-Mexico Border Geographic Information System (GIS) for Environmental Health—The goals of this project are to (1) develop an integrated set of compatible environmental, population, and health outcome GIS databases for the U.S.-Mexico border region; (2) develop specific GIS applications for addressing environmental health problems along the border; (3) develop a set of practical reports or manuals for environmental health practitioners that address opportunities for applying GIS to environmental health problems; (4) increase collaboration and information sharing between the U.S. and Mexican border states; and (5) support the development of a similar environmental health GIS system for the border areas of Mexico. Coordinated GIS projects have been initiated in all U.S. border states to meet these objectives (a complete listing of projects is available at www.epa.gov/orsearth/gis4.htm). The future focus for this project is to provide more advanced training in the area of GIS modeling to the Environmental Health Workgroup, Air Workgroup, and Water Workgroup of the Border XXI Program. Mr. Paul English provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000.

Health Effects of Particulate Matter on Children in the El Paso Area—Under this initiative, a study was conducted at 23 schools located in El Paso, Texas, to test the levels of volatile organic chemicals (VOC) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in the schools. A source receptor model using GIS mapping was applied to the data. The results of the study revealed that these chemicals are present at levels of concern. A second study was initiated in Fall 2000 that involved testing fourth and fifth graders for VOCs and NO₂ and associated health effects. Dr. Melissa Gonzales, EPA Office of Research and Development, provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000.

Retrospective Study on Pediatric Asthma and Air Quality—A study focused on children (ages 1 to 17) residing in the Paso del Norte air shed who visited the emergency room for asthma treatment. Results of the study indicated a positive correlation between particulate matter levels and incidents of asthma. As a result, a follow-up asthma study was conducted in the cities of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Dr. Carlos Rincón and Mr. Juan Rauda Esquivel provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000.

Border Health Commission (BHC)—In July 2000, Dr. Donna Shalala, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Mexico's Minister of Health, Mr. Jose Antonio Gonzalez, signed a memorandum of agreement to form the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission (BHC). The objectives of the BHC is to institutionalize a domestic focus for health that will transcend political change and to provide a creative venue to address border health issues. The BHC is made up of 26 members—13 members from each country, including representation from each of the border states. BHC will serve as a policy-making, but not a grant-making, entity, although the commission will be able to direct agencies and individuals toward available funds. Ms. Ginny Gidi, Health and Human Services, provided a brief summary of the formation and function of BHC during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

Clean Water in Homes—The Environmental Health Workgroup and the Water Workgroup have developed the pilot program, *Agua Limpia en Casa* (Clean Water in Homes), in border communities located in the states of Chihuahua and Sonora. The objective of the program is to improve the health conditions of persons living in small, impoverished communities that lack basic infrastructure. The program will eventually be extended to both sides of the border. Mr. Rauda provided an update on this initiative during the workgroup meeting on September 20, 2000.

Natural Resources Work Group

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The Natural Resources Workgroup received updates on the progress of each workgroup's initiatives.

Follow-up to the Rio Grande Symposium

Workgroup members noted the importance of the U.S.-Mexico Rio Grande Symposium and how it will serve to protect the habitat between the United States and Mexico. As of September 2000, meetings had been held to identify short-term goals and project objectives; however, the objectives have not yet been finalized or approved. Workgroup members discussed at length a strategy for tracking and maintaining the improvement of habitats located in the border region. By January 2001, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) plans to complete a baseline report, which will include biological and hydrological studies on various habitats in the border region and associated GIS maps.

Members of the workgroup proposed having a kick-off meeting with invited guests such as representatives of EPA, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), SEMARNAP, and U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (COE), to help formulate the projects. Members also discussed member participation and special task force groups that may need to be included. Ms. Susan Goodwin, DOI; and Mr. Bruce Moring, USGS, led discussions on this topic during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

Report on the Dry Desert Letter of Intent to Work, Western Sonoran Desert, and Report on the Wet Desert Letter of Intent to Work, Western Sonoran Desert

Workgroup members briefly discussed the need to preserve the dry desert region which includes the Chihuahuan Desert and the Sonoran Desert and protect the wetlands throughout the wet desert region. Ms. Susan Goodwin, DOI; and Ms. Pia Gallina, *Consejo Nacional De Areas Naturales Protegidas* (CONANP), led discussions on this topic during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

Implementation of the Joint Declaration on the Colorado River Delta

The workgroup members received an update on a lawsuit between the NGO union and the U.S. government. The NGO union has postponed any further participation in binational meetings; however, binational efforts to enforce protective policies along the river basin are occurring. A task force is meeting to identify actions and restoration in the Colorado Delta, and plans will be implemented and executed to continue work. SEMARNAP, in cooperation with USDA and Baja California, is continuing its effort to complete a report to continue to encourage NGOs to attend meetings for the aid and conservation of Yuma, Arizona. Ms. Susan Goodwin, DOI, led discussions on this topic during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

Binational Efforts in Big Bend/Maderas del Carmen/Santa Elena Canyon

Workshops have been held to protect and help work with the Big Bend area. Mr. Pablo Dominguez, Santa Elena Canyon Flora and Fauna Protected Area, stated that he would like to see a better response from the fire department to forest fires in that region. Mr. Dominguez has organized environmental education tours through the Big Bend area. An inventory has been conducted on the fish population in the protected areas as well as water quality monitoring for some of the areas that require potable water. Mr. Dominguez also proposed a study on invertebrates in this area.

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Mr. Dominguez brought to the workgroup's attention a conflict that has arisen where Mexican ranchers allow their cattle to cross the Rio Grande to feed on the U.S. side. He stated that the Mexican ranchers need to stop allowing their cattle to cross the river and retrieve any cattle that remain on the U.S. side. Mr. Dominguez also asked for support to help with landfills in the Big Bend area.

Mr. Vidal Davila, Big Bend National Park, also discussed a number of issues related to this topic during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

San Pedro River Joint Declaration—Binational Cooperation and Status of New Designation

Workgroup members discussed efforts to train several Mexican biologists in monitoring sites and rivers and to start an environmental education and outreach program. The San Pedro River Joint Declaration aims to help Mexico receive a trust fund for efforts on environmental conservation. Members of the San Pedro River Joint Declaration are trying to create an interactive compact disc that will include documentation about the history of the river, historical photos from the 1800s and 1900s, and a 360-degree virtual tour of the area. Mr. Beau McClure, Bureau of Land Management, and Ms. Pia Gallina, CONANP, led discussions on this topic during the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000.

Binational Projects Between Chiricuhua National Monument, Coronado National Monument, and Ajos/Bavispe Forest Reserve

Mr. Jim Bellamy, U.S. National Park Service, made a presentation on binational preservation efforts at the Arizona Ajos/Bavispe Forest Reserve, Southeast Arizona Coronado National Monument, and San Pedro riparian areas. He explained that funding for the projects will be provided through the Border XXI Program, DOI, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), SEMARNAP, the Nature Conservancy, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. He also commented that fire is beneficial for these areas, explaining that 100 years of fire suppression at Chiricuhua is not very healthy for the parks, and that suppression has created abnormal stand structures, abnormal composition, and excessive vegetation, creating a high fuel load.

Environmental Information Resources Workgroup

Environmental Report for the Border—Members of the Environmental Information Resources Workgroup discussed at length the Border Environmental Report provided by SEMARNAP. The report is to help local and federal governments, universities, and other private agencies learn more about the status of the border environment. Topics of the report include descriptions of ecological resources within the regions, the future of the border and the border regions, and plans to combine and coordinate the efforts of the various border institutions to provide the public with environmental information.

During the workgroup meeting held September 20, 2000, members also discussed the socioeconomics of the project and how it affected air, water, soil, solid waste, and hazardous waste. Members stated that this report is the first effort to demonstrate some kind of progress toward objectives with the natural resources on the border. Efforts must be accomplished to fill gaps within the report. Downloaded copies of the reports are available.

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Geographical Information Systems—Members of the workgroup were also provided with an update on a GIS project that is being conducted by SEMARNAP, USGS, EPA, DOI, the City of San Diego, California, and COE at a cost of \$30 million. The project will include color mapping of the border, elevations, quarter quads, raster graphics, topographical graphics, and line graphs. The workgroup members were also informed that Texas Natural Resource Information Systems (TNRIS) has almost completed a web site that will provide public access to publications, maps, and data with binational GIS support, data development, and integration; and that the Border EcoWeb (located on the Internet at <http://www.borderecoweb.sdsu.edu>) has many links to access border environmental information and contains an information directory.

Summary of Selected Environmental Indicators from the U.S.-Mexico Border XXI Program:

Progress Report 1996-2000—Members of the workgroup agreed that, in the future, the workgroup needs to focus on improving and increasing public access to border-related environmental issues. The members then briefly discussed the Wire the Digital Border project, EPA grants and funds for environmental education workshops, and the need for useful environmental indicators of hazardous waste in a community.

During the workgroup meeting held on September 20, 2000, Mr. Rolando Rios, *Instituto Nacional de Ecología* (INE)—SEMARNAP; and Mr. Tomás Torres, EPA Region 9, briefly stated that there needs to be a greater advance in indicators for hazardous waste. The U.S. and Mexican governments need to make a greater effort to teach users to understand the indicators. The only step in teaching the users was in 1997, when groups had to learn the methodology of indicators, however, that is no longer practiced. Workgroup comments focused on offering the community a positive outlook towards education about indicators.

Other topics discussed during the workgroup meeting included:

- e. Border ECO Web
- f. Border XXI Web site and Utilizing the Web for Information
- g. Release/Exchange of Information/Wire the Border
- h. Environmental Education
- i. Future Public Meetings
- j. One Stop "Border Depot" For the Compliance Assistance Program

Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup

The Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup discussed their future plans to expand emergency response actions from the sister-cities to a sister-states concept, and to aggressively pursue the response practices in the industrial sector. Also, the workgroup was informed about a recent modification to the La Paz agreement that was issued in order to allow the sharing of equipment between sister cities during emergency response. Three such agreements are already in effect between (1) Reynosa, Mexico and McAllen, Texas; (2) San Luis, Arizona and San Luis, Rio Colorado; and (3) Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora.

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The members of the workgroup also discussed other recommendations for future emergency response drills that stemmed from lessons learned from previous Joint Response Team (JRT) emergency response drills and training.

The workgroup also received public comments from persons attending the workgroup meeting. Significant concerns expressed by meeting participants included the following:

- a. One commentator suggested that models for emergency response and contingency plans should be applied on Indian reservations.

- Another participant stated that hazardous material is being transported into the state of New Mexico, but the local governments in the state do not have hazardous materials emergency response plans. He then suggested that local communities should receive federal funding and assistance for the development of hazardous materials emergency response plans.

Water Workgroup

The members of the Water Workgroup briefly discussed the formation of regional water subworkgroups within the workgroup. The members also commented extensively on the future implementation of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program, which establishes a maximum quantity of pollutant that a water body in Mexico can receive and still meet federal water quality standards. The members agreed that the first step would be to establish a consensus between the United States and Mexico on the exact loading values. The members explained that because the watersheds in the region are influenced by both nations, and that the watershed quality will ultimately affect both sides, it would be necessary to come to a consensus about water quality assessment procedures. Also, the workgroup members agreed that it would be important for communities on both sides to see themselves as stakeholders for the entire basin. Improvements to water quality can only be made through the exchange of endpoint identification and loading estimates, and lasting effects will only be seen through joint compliance monitoring between Mexico and the United States. There are currently 8 ongoing projects and 12 new projects underway in the TMDL program. One TMDL study is currently underway for the Salton Sea watershed in California. High salinity, nutrients, and selenium are the primary contaminants which threaten the local habitat. Another study is being performed for the Alamo River in Nuevo León, Mexico.

Regarding the status of the development of water quality indicators, the workgroup members were informed that the development of environmental indicators for ground water quality is underway. Environmental indicators are also being developed for the following parameters: hardness, conductivity, chlorides, nitrates, and total dissolved solids (TDS).

Pollution Prevention Workgroup

Members of the Pollution Prevention (P2) Workgroup discussed their accomplishments under the Border XXI Program, such as:

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- Significant reduction of pollution in the border area resulting from numerous site assessment visits at *maquiladoras* via collaboration between the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) and the *Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente* (PROFEPA, or Mexico's Federal Attorney General for Environmental Protection) (P4 program)
- Fifty percent reduction of water use and the use of solder dross by member organizations due to the efforts of the Arizona–Mexico International Green Organization (AMIGO)
 - Encouragement of several public–academic–private partnership programs that have flourished under the Border XXI Program, including the U.S.–Mexico Science Foundation and other organizations, such as EPA, INE, PROFEPA, and Cal-EPA
 - The Waste WiSe Program (San Diego/Tijuana) has been successful in improving environmental compliance via P2. It has provided the necessary training for a sustainable program that meets the high demands of cost savings in industry. This topic was discussed during the workgroup meeting held September 20, 2000.
 - P2 Resource Exchange Center—Industry extension was established in 1997 to act as a clearinghouse for standardized P2 database. Its goal is to provide a comprehensive source of P2 information. This topic was discussed during the workgroup meeting held September 20, 2000.

Regarding the future vision for the workgroup, the members agreed that their primary objectives should be: (1) to increase and improve the quality of state and tribal workgroup participation; and (2) to enhance and improve communication mechanisms, including increased communication between customs agencies, local agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, and *maquiladora* associations. They also noted that the workgroup should develop benchmarks for measuring their progress in meeting their goals.

Air Workgroup

During the meeting of the Air Workgroup, members reflected on several of their accomplishments under the Border XXI Program, including:

- Establishment of air quality monitoring networks in the principal border cities;
- Completion of emission inventories in the principal border cities;
- Development of state implementation plans (SIP) in Mexicali, Baja California; Tijuana, Baja California; and Nogales, Sonora;
- Establishment of the Ciudad Juárez–El Paso–Doña Ana County Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), which has resulted in a new, streamlined binational channel by which air quality improvement plans for the regional air shed can be proposed and implemented.

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The workgroup also recognized the significant contributions and accomplishments of the California-Baja California, Chihuahua–Texas–New Mexico, and Arizona–Sonora subworkgroups.

The members of the workgroup then discussed their vision for the future of the Air Workgroup, which included: (1) improving the effectiveness of public participation; and (2) establishing effective mechanisms for ensuring continuity of the workgroup's programs in the future.

Border tribes should be included in the drafting of the next border plan. Regarding regional tribal assistance and partnering, the Air Workgroup stressed the need for resources to support such efforts. For example, members of the workgroup have contacted tribes about establishing air quality monitoring programs, but have limited resources to support the initiative.

Hazardous and Solid Waste Workgroup

During the meeting of the Hazardous and Solid Waste Workgroup, members reflected on the some of their accomplishments under the Border XXI Program, including;

- Establishment of a consultative mechanism for new hazardous or solid waste facilities, which includes mechanisms for public involvement in the permitting process and provides a comprehensive list of waste facilities;
- Involvement in several precedent-setting enforcement actions;
- Preparation of several P2 proposals, and training and education.

The workgroup members also noted several workgroup initiatives that are underway, such as:

- Securing the involvement of tire manufacturers in dialogue regarding tirewaste management because of the limited capacity of local governments to handle this type and volume of waste;
- Providing recommendations to INE regarding Mexico's treatment, storage, and disposal (TSD) facility regulatory structure;
- Beginning a binational initiative to manage hazardous and solid waste data;
- Data management is not yet binational
 - There is a commitment to link Mexico's *Sistema de Rastreo de Residuos Peligrosos* (SIRREP) and the U.S. Hazardous Waste Tracking System (Haztraks).
 - Public access to data via the internet is still unavailable.
 - Data being entered into SIRREP and Haztraks.
 - New Haztraks release is scheduled for end of calendar year 2000.

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The members of the workgroup stressed the importance of improving the coordination and communication between governments and organizations in order to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure the completion of current workgroup initiatives.

Cooperative Enforcement and Compliance Workgroup

During the meeting of the Cooperative Enforcement and Compliance Workgroup, members reflected on some of their accomplishments under the Border XXI Program, including:

- ☐ Formation of five regional subworkgroups along the border that have effectively cooperated on various investigations, joint inspections, and other specific incidents; the application of environmental enforcement and compliance strategies within the five regional subworkgroups has improved coordination among local, state, and federal agencies on both sides of the border;
- ☐ Assistance in the development of a capacity-building training program designed to educate border personnel on environmental enforcement programs, which has resulted in the training of hundreds of individuals on the legal aspects of cross-border transportation of hazardous substances, chemicals, and pesticides, and the illegal commerce of ozone-depleting substances, and flora and fauna;
- ☐ Successful collaboration with EPA, PROFEPA, and the border states to promote environmental auditing;
- ☐ Increase of projects conducted along the border area to promote enforcement of and compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

The members of the workgroup then discussed future objectives of the Cooperative Enforcement and Compliance Workgroup, which included: (1) the exploration of mechanisms to expand the efforts of the workgroup to include other transboundary issues; (2) the exploration of mechanisms holding responsible parties accountable for their actions and for addressing the issues directly; and (3) promoting public participation.

PRESENTATION OF THE BORDER XXI PROGRESS REPORT

Mr. Nitze stressed the importance of articulating the successes and achievements of the Border XXI Workgroups. He informed the meeting participants that 75 copies of the English version of the Border XXI Program Progress Report would be available in October 2000. He added that the Spanish version of the report would be presented to the President of Mexico in November 2000.

Mr. Nitze then provided a brief summary of program-wide issues that need to be addressed in the future, including:

- Industry must have greater involvement in order to meet all the goals of the Border XXI Program;

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- The Border XXI Program must work directly with cities to remediate contaminated sites;
- NADB, which is insufficiently funded, must be expanded.

He added that the momentum of the current Border XXI Program must be maintained in order to ensure the future success of the program.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Plácido Dos Santos and Ms. Jennifer Kraus, members of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB), moderated the public comment period. Ms. Lorena Lopez of EPA's San Diego Border Office served as a facilitator. Ms. Kraus introduced the GNEB as a presidential advisory council on border environmental issues. She emphasized the importance that public comment has held in the GNEB process and stated that the Border XXI Program can benefit from public comments, as well.

Before opening the floor for public comment, Mr. Dos Santos pointed out that the recent, coinciding change in the federal administrations of both neighboring countries provided a rare opportunity to shape the future of North America.

Significant concerns expressed during the public comment period are summarized below:

- ☐ Many commentators recommended that the Border XXI Program do more to increase public participation, stating that border residents, and especially local governments, do not have sufficient mechanisms for providing input to the Border XXI Program. Also, many participants recommended improving the NGO invitation process and supporting greater NGO participation in workgroups and meetings.
- ☐ Mr. Bob Currey, Paso del Norte Joint Advisory Committee, praised the Border XXI Air Workgroup for its accomplishments in air quality monitoring network installation, modeling, transboundary information sharing, and advisory groups. He then asked that the federal governments help finance projects that affect air quality. Offered as examples were transportation, fuels, waste, weatherstripping, and enforcement programs.
- ☐ One participant pointed out that individual workgroup efforts do not come together, and recommended that the workgroups host more roundtable discussions to work on policy issues. Ms. Chapman of the Texas Center for Policy Studies recommended improving the NGO invitation process, to include expanding the depth and breadth of the invitees.
- ☐ Several participants requested that tribal governments be included in the Border XXI Program in the future.

Additional comments from individual attendees have been highlighted as follows:

- ☐ Mr. Bill Wilcox, Arizona citizen, stated that the program needs to do more to increase the participation of the public at large. He suggested that a newsletter to corporations, tribes, and citizens might be an effective way to improve public participation. Mr. Wilcox also expressed concern over creating more administrative organizations with overlapping

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interests and “red tape.”

- Mr. Octavio Chávez, reminded the group that all quality processes must have a reality check, such as feedback from stakeholders. Border residents, and especially local governments, do not have sufficient mechanisms to provide input to the Border XXI Program. He reminded the attendees that area municipalities live the reality of the border and they must be included in a more meaningful way. Mr. Chávez suggested that eight more sister city advisory councils be established. He concluded by stating that while government changes, area residents do not, and citizens must be afforded ownership in these programs.
- Dr. Carlos Rincón thanked the program and recognized the improvement in Border XXI Program public participation over the years. He encouraged the workgroups to identify and recommend individuals to continue working on the program. Dr. Rincón stated that he would like to see industry form a workgroup that would promote sustainable development. A second comment was made by another individual stating that GNEB included a similar recommendation in its evaluation of the Border XXI Program.
- A representative of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) pointed out that individual workgroup efforts do not come together, and recommended that the workgroups use a roundtable discussion to work on policy issues. NWF also suggested mechanisms for working with NGOs to improve local participation, including adopting GNEB's public forum format and increased integration between GNEB and the Border XXI Program in general.
- Ms. Karen Chapman, Texas Center for Policy Studies, echoed NWF's comment about improved integration between GNEB and the Border XXI Program, and stated that she has been impressed with the transboundary exchange under the Border XXI Program, but criticized community involvement and their ability to meaningfully benefit from the program.
- Ms. Verónica Carbajal, Paso del Norte Clean Cities Coalition, reminded participants that NGOs and the public need to be encouraged to participate—community participation mechanisms must improve. She suggested a scholarship program for attendance at meetings, and decried the need for better environmental justice efforts.
- A representative from the Rio Grande–Río Bravo Basin Committee, requested a greater NGO participation in workgroups and meetings. She also requested a physical presence in south Texas—such as in Laredo and the Lower Rio Grande Valley—be established.
- Mr. George Kouros, Interhemispheric Resource Center, invited participants to an NGO environmental conference at the end of October 2000. He provided the following web address for additional information (www.encuentrofronterizo.org) and urged people to attend. Mr. Kouros reminded the group that several NGOs exist that are well funded and have resources to improve public participation. He also suggested that printed program material be improved to show more results instead of program descriptions. Mr. Kouros

**BORDER XXI PROGRAM NATIONAL COORDINATORS' MEETING
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stated that we need to bring binational public attention, which has waned since the advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement, back to the border region.

- Mr. Mark Sixkiller, GNEB (Paloham Indians), represents 24 different Indian nations. He thinks that in this transition period for the workgroups, he would like to see the tribes at the table for the second round. Mr. Sixkiller stated that the key was taking a watershed/holistic approach to sustainable development, an approach that Indian tribes have long practiced. He feels that having a mingling of cultures and environmental approaches will help the board in the next phase.
- Mr. Ed Patrykus, El Paso Environmental Group, reflected on the protests of the 1980s against nuclear waste dumps in his town and how he felt that the EPA was not responsive to the needs of the local people. He also stated that he would like to have the summaries from these meetings so that he could follow up on the agreements made. He also expressed his concern about radioactive and toxic waste being buried underground and how it might be affecting the already scarce water resources.
- Mr. Guillermo Fernandez was concerned with binational cooperation. He thought that there needed to be more continuity to the actions created by the Border XXI Program. Although he thinks that the program has been very successful, he feels that the program does not have the organization to incorporate participation from local agencies and the public. He feels that the program should help social organizations and local groups to increase participation. He also stressed the importance of education, saying that communities need to feel ownership for the problems and solutions.
- Mr. Bess Metcalf, Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition, is part of an organization concerned with sustainability issues in the basin and wanted to let everyone know that the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition is holding a conference in November 2000.
- One public participant was concerned with two issues in particular: (1) the General Federal Water Law, and (2) land title laws. He said that these changed the profiles of land in Mexico and that they have affected the sensitivity of political society and participation of communities.
- Ms. Lorena Lopez, EPA San Diego Border Office, wanted to share some of the information she gathered at roundtables (small sessions of local people, local government, and NGOs) to gather input on development of the next border plan. She presented this list as "what would work next time?"
 - Additional funding
 - Communications between state and federal agencies
 - Cross-border communication
 - Technical assistance (more computers)
 - Education (formal and informal)
 - Regional workgroups
 - Increased public participation

**BORDER XXI PROGRAM NATIONAL COORDINATORS' MEETING
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- Expansion of border region
- Local government participation

Ms. Felicia Marcus, EPA Region 9, closed the public comments session explaining that there were fewer public comments at this Plenary Session because the Border XXI Program is effectively presenting more opportunities for people to express their opinions at local meetings.

- ☐ Mr. Pete Maggiore, Ten States U.S. State Environmental Agency Representative for New Mexico, told the group that the main issue is that the ten border states are seen as equals with the federal government. He cites meetings between EPA and the ten border states' local governments to discuss notification programs, and long-term cooperative programs as progress in the right direction. However, he notes that the program is lacking in some areas—namely funding, flexible workgroup structure with regional concerns, and the need for more local participation.
- ☐ Ms. Pat Banegas, GNEB, recommended more participation by federal, state, local and tribal governments. She also encouraged the participation of academic and private institutions. She said that these groups should all meet regularly to reach sustainable development goals. Ms. Banegas also spoke of the evaluation of the GNEB that is being conducted by an independent consulting group. She spoke of the 5th Report, which encourages them to focus on changing the regulatory perception of the border in the eyes of Washington, D.C. officials. The U.S. Congress needs to invest in the border area and include issues of human rights and environmental justice on the agenda for the border region.
- ☐ Mr. Oscar Romo, *Consejo Consultivo para el Desarrollo Sustentable de la Region 1* (CCDS, or Region 1 Advisory Council for Sustainable Development), presented the committee's accomplishments and some recommendations for completing various projects. Since their first meeting, they have had over 129 meetings. Mr. Romo encouraged the Water and Air Workgroups to work more in concert across the 2000-mile U.S.-Mexico border region.
- ☐ Mr. Fernando Macias, BECC General Manager, provided BECC highlights. Forty-two projects have been certified of which 25 are based in the United States and 17 are based in Mexico. Project value is \$1.3 million. Their goals are to better utilize border resources and expedite the certification process. They are seeking a stronger relationship with the states and the federal governments. BECC is also looking for partners to develop a strategic plan and additional funding.
- ☐ Mr. Victor Miramontes, NADB, provided the NADB September 2000 Status Report. A copy of this report was made available to all attendees.
- ☐ Mr. Dennis Amejo, U.S. Local Government Representative Co-chairman for New Mexico, began by defining the border area as including 24 counties running from San Diego, California to Brownsville, Texas. In the summer of 1998, a group met to

**BORDER XXI PROGRAM NATIONAL COORDINATORS' MEETING
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determine whether there were problems specific to the border region, which resulted in the formation of the U.S.-Mexico Border Issues Committee. Specific problems seen in counties bordering the United States and Mexico are centered around a financial drain due to the incarceration of illegals and the medical cost incurred because of the Cobra Law (which allows the INS to grant a temporary visa to illegals that are in need of medical attention). Mr. Amejo also cited that federal funding for these programs continues to decrease.

- Mr. Ed Azobaia, Fire Marshal's Office, was asking for assistance and support in training firefighters in hazardous materials response operations. He asked for funding and assistance with establishing any contacts that would help him provide training for firefighters.

CLOSING REMARKS

In his closing statement, Mr. Nitze agreed that in the future NGOs, community groups, and governments will need to work together towards common goals to ensure the success of border initiatives. He also emphasized that communities need to address and need assistance in addressing environmental problems holistically and need to work to adjust existing programs, such as P2, to meet the goals of the community. In addition, he stressed that community members need to be informed and require actual data about the environmental quality of their communities.